

Salvation

by Marvin Cowan

Mormonism teaches a different concept of sin and salvation than historic, Biblical Christianity, emphasizing the importance of obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel for individual salvation.

Topics: "Christian Salvation", "Mormon Theology"

Description

Marvin Cowan preaches about the differences between Mormon teaching on sin and salvation and historic, Biblical Christianity. He contrasts LDS beliefs on original sin, salvation through atonement, and the importance of obedience to laws and ordinances with what the Bible teaches. The sermon emphasizes the need for a clear understanding of salvation and the role of Jesus Christ as the only Mediator between God and men.

Transcript

"We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression."

"We believe that through the atonement of Christ all mankind may be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel."

"We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost."

2nd, 3rd and 4th Articles of Faith by Joseph Smith

SIN

Mormon teaching concerning sin and salvation are very different from historic, Biblical Christianity because LDS rely on sources other than the Bible for their definitions. For example, Apostle John Widtsoe said, "In the true gospel of Jesus Christ there is no original sin" (E. & R., p. 195). Apostle Bruce McConkie also said, "It is possible to transgress a law without committing a sin as in the case of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden...it is proper and according the scriptural pattern to speak of the transgression of Adam, but not the sin of Adam" (M.D., p. 804).

But, I John 3:4 declares that "sin is the transgression of the law!" In reference to the second Article of Faith, Apostle James Talmage said, "Divine justice forbids that we be accounted sinners solely because

our parents transgressed" (A. of F., p. 475). But, man is not accounted a sinner "solely" because of Adam, "for all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23). It is also true that "by one man (Adam) sin entered the world" (Rom 5:12). If Adam did not "sin" as McConkie claimed, what does this verse mean? Thus, men are "children of disobedience" and "by nature, children of wrath" (Eph. 2:2-3). That is why men need to be "born again" (John 3:3,7) and that new birth is how they become sons of God (John 1:12-13). As Paul wrote to the Galatian believers, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26).

Even the B. of M. says that "He (God) showed unto all men that they were lost because of the transgression of their parents [Adam and Eve]" (II Nephi 2:21). It also says, "For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam" (Mosiah 3:19). Thus, the B. of M. says men must "be born again" and become sons of God (Mosiah 27:25). The P. of G.P. also says that from the time Adam and Eve listened to Satan, men "began to be carnal, sensual, and devilish" (Moses 5:13). President Joseph Fielding Smith also declared that "mankind (is) carnal, sensual, devilish by nature" (D. of S., Vol. II, p. 280). But, most Mormons deny that they are sinners by nature and think of themselves as gods in embryo, as Apostle John Widtsoe said: "God and man are of the same race, differing only in their degrees of advancement" (Rational Theology, p. 61; G.T.A., p. 107).

Therefore, in order for Mormons and Christians to communicate, the LDS concept of salvation needs to be defined and contrasted with what the Bible teaches about it. All sincere LDS believe in Jesus Christ as Savior, but what do they teach about "salvation?"

TWO KINDS OF SALVATION

Pres. Joseph Fielding Smith wrote, "Salvation is twofold: General - that which comes to all men irrespective of a belief (in this life) in Christ - and Individual - that which man merits through his own acts through life and by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel" (D. of S., Vol. I, p. 134).

Apostle James Talmage said, "The first effect (of the atonement) is to secure to all mankind alike, exemption from the penalty of the fall, thus, providing a plan of General Salvation. The second effect is to open a way for Individual Salvation whereby mankind may secure remission of personal sins. As these sins are the result of individual acts, it is just that forgiveness for them should be conditioned on individual compliance with prescribed requirements - obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel" (A. of F., p. 87).

General Salvation

Mormon writers often call "General Salvation" a "Universal Salvation" or simply "Salvation." Apostle Stephen L. Richards said, "There will be a General Salvation for all in the sense in which the term is generally used, but salvation, meaning resurrection is not exaltation" (Contributions of Joseph Smith, p. 5).

Apostle Bruce McConkie said, "All men are saved by grace alone without any act on their part, meaning they are resurrected" (What the Mormons Think of Christ, p. 28). Thus, general salvation means resurrection in Mormonism. But, the Bible says, "Now is the day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2). If salvation means resurrection, is the resurrection taking place now? Matt. 1:21 says of Jesus, "He shall save His people from their sins." I Tim. 1:15 also says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." And I Cor. 15:3 declares that "Christ died for our sins." So, Biblical salvation saves from sin and its penalty. But, LDS believe that all men "irrespective of a belief in this life" will experience general salvation or resurrection because of Christ's atonement.

Jesus said that all men will be resurrected, but there will be a "resurrection of damnation" as well as a "resurrection of life" (John 5:29). The resurrection of damnation is not salvation. However, McConkie said, "Those who gain only this general or unconditional Salvation will still be judged according to their works and receive their places in a terrestrial or telestial kingdom. They will therefore be damned" (M.D., p. 669). So, McConkie says that it is possible to be "saved" and "damned" at the same time! Mormonism also teaches that all but a few sons of perdition will be saved or resurrected to one of three degrees of glory. LDS Apostle James Talmage says, "Some degree of salvation will come to all who have not forfeited their right to it" (A. of F., p. 91). LDS try to support that idea with Rom. 5:18 and I Cor. 15:22. But, the "all" in those texts must be qualified by the context and the overall teaching in the New Testament. Rom. 5:17 speaks of those who receive the abundance of grace and "the gift of righteousness." Verse 18 says "all" those who receive that gift are justified or made righteous before God. Likewise, I Cor. 15:22 declares, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." All mortals are "in Adam" and therefore they die (Heb. 9:27). It also says "all in Christ" shall be made alive. But, all men are not "in Christ." As Jesus Himself declared, "He that believeth on Him [Christ] is not condemned but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).

While LDS teach that unbelievers are saved with "general salvation" through Christ, the Bible says they are "condemned!" Jesus said, "By Me if any man enter in he shall be saved" (John 10:9). Paul and Silas told the Philippian jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by Me" (John 14:6; Rom. 10:9-10, 13; Acts 2:21, 4:12; II Tim. 3:15). There is no Biblical support for teaching that salvation means "resurrection." Biblical salvation comes through faith in Christ and saves the believer from sin and its consequences of eternal separation from God (II Thes. 1:7-9), or the second death (Rev. 20:14-15).

Personal Salvation

LDS Apostle Bruce McConkie declared:

Full salvation is attained by virtue of knowledge, truth, righteousness, and all true principles. Many conditions must exist in order to make such salvation available to men. Without the atonement, the gospel, the priesthood, and the sealing power, there would be no salvation,. Without continuous revelation, the ministering angels, the working of miracles, the prevalence of gifts of the spirit, there would be no salvation. If it had not been for Joseph Smith and the restoration there would be no salvation. There is no salvation outside The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (M.D., p. 670).

Notice that McConkie mentioned at least fifteen things that are essential to individual salvation in the above quote. Pres. Joseph Fielding Smith said, "Individual Salvation," or "exaltation," is that which man merits by "obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel" (D. of S. Vol I, p. 134). Four of those requirements are mentioned in the fourth Article of Faith (quoted at the beginning of this chapter). But, many other things are required if one expects to achieve godhood in the highest glory of the celestial kingdom. The following are among the requirements for "individual salvation," beginning with the fourth Article of Faith.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

Remember that the Christ of Mormonism is a "literal son" of a Father and Mother God, and is a spirit brother of Lucifer. He became "a god" through eternal progression, and was married and had physical

offspring. His atonement provides resurrection for all men and opens the door so men can "work out" their individual salvation. For more information about Christ, see our chapter on God.

Furthermore, LDS do not believe that faith justifies anyone. Apostle Talmage said, "The sectarian dogma of justification by faith alone has exercised an influence for evil" (A. of F., p. 480). He also calls it a "pernicious doctrine" (Ibid., pp. 107, 480). But, Paul said, "We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28). He also declared, "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). Paul warned, "But though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8-9).

Repentance

"God - commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). In reference to salvation, repentance means to change your mind about Christ (Acts 16:31), which results in a changed way of living in this earthly life (Titus 2:12). Thus, Christians believe that repentance and turning from sin to trusting Jesus Christ will result in a changed lifestyle in this life.

But, Talmage said, "We learn from the scriptures that repentance may be obtained under certain conditions, beyond the veil of mortality" (A. of F., p. 115). He even suggested that it is "proper and just that the gospel be carried to the spirits who were disobedient... who have rejected the word at different times" (Ibid., p. 148). However, McConkie wrote,

This life is the time that is given for men to repent and prepare to meet God. Those who have opportunity in this life to accept the truth are obligated to take it; otherwise, full salvation will be denied them. Hopes of reward through so-called death-bed repentance are vain. As Amulek said, 'If you have procrastinated the day of your repentance even until death, behold, ye have become subjected to the spirit of the devil, and he doth seal you his; therefore, the Spirit of the Lord hath withdrawn from you, and hath no place in you, and the devil hath all power over you, and this is the final state of the wicked' [B. of M. Alma 34:31-35] (M.D., p. 631).

Apostles Talmage and McConkie are not saying the same thing! But, the Bible declares, "Now is the day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2). It also says, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement" (Heb. 9:27). No opportunity to repent after death is offered in the Bible.

Baptism

McConkie said, "Baptism serves four purposes: 1) It is for the remission of sins. 2) It admits the repentant person to membership in the Church and Kingdom of God on earth. 3) It is the gate to the celestial kingdom of heaven. 4) It is the means whereby the door to personal sanctification is opened" (M.D., p. 70).

He further said, "The second birth begins when men are baptized in water by a legal administrator" (Ibid., p. 101). Since Mormonism teaches that "all men were first born in pre-existence as literal offspring of God our Heavenly Father" (Ibid., p. 84), why do men need to be born again? McConkie explains, "Little children are spiritually alive until they arrive at the age of accountability (Moroni 8:8-26). Then they die spiritually unless they are born again... by baptism they are born of water and of the Spirit" (M.D., p. 761).

McConkie also said in M.D. on p. 746, "Those who receive the gospel and join The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have power given them to become sons of God" (D. & C. 11:30; 35:2; 39:1-6; 45:8;

John 1:12). Of the texts he listed, only one mentioned baptism (D. & C. 39:6). All the others simply say you become a son of God by receiving Christ! The B. of M. says: "People must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters" (Mosiah 27:25). Notice that baptism is not mentioned in that context! The Bible also teaches that we become "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26; John 1:12).

LDS claim that "a legal administrator" (one with the LDS priesthood) must do the baptizing in order for God to "recognize" the baptism. Nowhere does the Bible say that priesthood is necessary in order for God to recognize someone's baptism. The only Biblical case of re-baptism is found in Acts 19:1-5 and the reason for it was not lack of authority or priesthood as LDS claim. Those Ephesian disciples had been baptized "unto repentance" with John's the Baptist's baptism, but they had not even heard of the Holy Ghost (vs. 2-4). When they heard Paul preach the New Testament message, "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (vs. 4-5). John's baptism was unto repentance, but believers' baptism identified the person with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Col. 2:12; Rom. 6:3-5). For more information on John's baptism, see Matt. 3:11, Mark 1:4, and Acts 13:24.

If "authority" or "priesthood" had been the issue in Acts 19:1-5, John's baptism should have been valid since John was born into Aaronic Priesthood lineage (Luke 1:5-13). Surely John had "authority" since he baptized Jesus (Matt. 3:13-17). Even if LDS claim that it was not John himself, but his disciples who baptized those men, it wouldn't help their position. If priesthood was needed in order for God to recognize baptism, surely John knew that and would not have sent unauthorized disciples out to baptize! LDS believe that a priest in the LDS Aaronic Priesthood is qualified to baptize, so John's baptism should have been valid even if it was done by one of his disciples. But, John's Aaronic Priesthood had been superseded by Jesus, the Great High Priest (Heb. 7:11-12). Therefore, John never once mentioned his priesthood. Neither John nor Jesus taught that priesthood was necessary in order to baptize! That is an LDS claim that has no Biblical support!

Yet, LDS Apostle Orson Pratt said:

But who in this generation have authority to baptize? None but those who have received authority in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: All other churches are entirely destitute of all authority from God; and any person who receives baptism or the Lord's Supper from their hands will highly offend God; for He looks upon them as the most corrupt of all people. Both Catholics and Protestants are nothing less than the 'whore of Babylon' whom the Lord denounces by the mouth of John the Revelator as having corrupted all the earth by their fornications and wickedness (The Seer, p. 255).

Mormons practice "baptism by immersion for the remission of sins" as their fourth Article of Faith declares. They use John 3:5 to support that doctrine, but the word "baptism" does not appear in that context. Jesus was talking about the difference between the first birth (physical) and the second birth (spiritual). Notice the context. In John 3:3, Jesus said, "Except a man be born again (literally "anew" or "from above") he cannot see the kingdom of God." In verse 4, Nicodemus asked, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Note that Nicodemus was asking about physical birth. Jesus answered in vs. 5-6, "Except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Then in v. 7, Jesus said, "Ye must be born again" ("anew" or "from above"). Many Bible students believe that being "born of the water" in this context refers to the physical birth since babies are literally born in water. Whatever the water is, the text does not say, "That which is born of the water is

spirit." It does say, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Since water is not spirit and the new birth is a spiritual birth, it cannot come by water baptism. Peter wrote, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever" (I Peter 1:23). Since water is corruptible and water is not "the Word of God," it cannot be the way which one is born again according to I Peter 1:23.

LDS also use Rom. 6:3, I Pet. 3:21, Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38 and 22:16, Gal. 3:27, Eph. 5:26, and Titus 3:5 to prove water baptism cleanses from sin. But, if these verses teach that baptism washes away sin, the Bible contradicts itself, because I John 1:7 declares that "the blood of Jesus Christ His [God's] Son cleanseth us from all sin." If Christ's blood cleanses from all sin, how much sin can be cleansed away by baptism? Is Baptism Essential to Salvation? by Austin Crouch and published by Broadman Press is a small book that helps explain that the above mentioned verses do not teach that baptism or water washes away sin.

In I Cor. 1:14-18, Paul said, "I thank God I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius... For Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel; not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." Was Paul saying, "I thank God that none of you are saved?" Or did he mean that Christ did not send him to see anyone saved? If baptism saves, that is what verses 14 and 17 would mean. Verse 21 continues, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

Notice that baptism was not involved in the saving. Paul also said that we are saved or born from above "by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26). Peter declared in I Peter 3:21 that baptism is a figure, or symbol and does "Not put away of the filth of the flesh," but it is "the answer of a good conscience toward God," because we obeyed Christ's command when we were saved "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Believer's baptism follows salvation as in Acts 8:32-39, 10:44-48 and 16:25-34. Baptism is important because anything Christ commanded is important! But, not everything He commanded us to do "saves" us. For example, He commanded us to pray, so prayer is very important to Christians, but prayer does not save anyone. Jesus Himself is the Savior who "saves them to the uttermost that come to God by Him" (Heb. 7:25).

Even the B. of M. says, "...neither are there any conditions whereby man can be saved except the conditions which I have told you" (Mosiah 4:8). Only salvation through the atoning blood of Christ is mentioned and nowhere in that text is baptism mentioned. The same is true in Alma 11:40 and 38:9. Nor does the B. of M. say anything about priesthood being necessary so that it is "recognized" by the Lord. Yet, LDS claim that the B. of M. is "the fulness of the gospel" (D. & C. 20:9). If that is true, it should teach the proper place of priesthood in baptism. In Mosiah 18:14, Alma baptized himself as he baptized Helam. Did Alma have the Priesthood authority before he was baptized, so that his baptism would be recognized by God? Why cannot others have priesthood before baptism if Alma had it? If he did not have it, his baptism was not valid by LDS standards, and the B. of M. is a record of apostates! Either way leaves the LDS with a dilemma.

The B. of M. also says that baptism is "unto repentance and remission of sins" (Moroni 8:11). But, D. & C. 20:37 says that those whose works "manifest they have received the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of sins, shall be received by baptism into His Church." Thus, LDS scripture confuses rather than clarifies the doctrine of baptism! LDS often ask, "Why was Jesus baptized if baptism is not essential for salvation?"

They claim that Jesus is our example, but they also admit that Jesus had no sin! He cannot be our example in being "baptized for the remission of sins" if He had no sin. Why, then, was Jesus baptized? In Matt. 3:15, Jesus said to John, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." Jesus was declaring, "You, John the Baptist, are the last prophet of the Old Testament (Luke 16:16, Matt. 11:13) and I am come to fulfill the law" (Matt. 5:17). "Thus, We shall fulfill all righteousness... Allow it to be this way for now (you baptizing me), later it will be different." Obviously Jesus' baptism did not save Him even though it was "necessary" to fulfill all righteousness.

LDS despise infant baptism and the B. of M. declares, "Little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore, the curse of Adam is taken from them in me... it is solemn mockery before God that ye should baptize little children" (Moroni 8:8-9; also see D. & C. 29:46-47). D. & C. 68:27 says, "And their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when eight years old and receive the laying on of hands." If little children are not capable of committing sin until the age of accountability which is the age of eight (see D. & C. 18:42), what sins are remitted by the baptism of an eight-year-old child? Baptizing an eight-year-old child who had personally believed in Jesus Christ is certainly Biblical. But, to baptize a child simply because he is eight years old, like the LDS do, is not Biblical.

Philip was preaching Jesus Christ to the Ethiopian eunuch who wanted to be baptized then and there. Philip said, "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest" (Acts 8:36-37). Acts 2:41 also says, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized." The issue was faith, not age. The B. of M. says, "all little children are alive in Christ, and also all they that are without the law. For the power of redemption cometh on all them that have no law; wherefore, he that is not condemned, or he that is under no condemnation, cannot repent; and unto such baptism availeth nothing but it is a mockery before God, denying the mercies of Christ, and the power of His Holy Spirit, and putting trust in dead works" (Moroni 8:22-23). Notice that not only all little children, but also "all they that are without the law" are now alive in Christ and need no repentance or baptism (see also Moroni 8:11-14). Why, then, are Mormons proselyting those without the law and getting baptized by proxy for those who died without the law? Mormon scripture says they don't need baptism, so Mormon scripture conflicts with Mormon doctrine and practice!

Christians do not always agree on the details of water baptism, but they do agree that "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (I Cor. 12:13). That is the "one baptism" mentioned in Eph. 4:5 without which water baptism has no meaning. That baptism is the spiritual birth experienced by every believer the moment he trusts Christ (Rom. 8:9). By it, we become members of the body of Christ, the church (Col. 1:18, 24).

Laying on of Hands

Talmage declared, "The authority to bestow the Holy Ghost belongs to the Melchizedek Priesthood, whereas water baptism may be administered by a priest officiating in the ordinances of the lesser or Aaronic Priesthood" (A. of F., p. 167). He also said, "The ordinances of laying on of hands for the bestowal of the Holy Ghost is associated with that of confirmation into the Church. The officiating elder, acting in the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ, says, 'Receive the Holy Ghost,' and 'I confirm you a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' " (Ibid., p. 166).

Joseph Smith said, "There is a difference between the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Cornelius received the Holy Ghost before he was baptized, which was the convincing power of God unto him of the truth of the Gospel, but he could not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost until after he was

baptized" (T. of P.J.S., p. 199). But, Acts 10:44-48 shows that Joseph Smith was wrong because Cornelius received the "gift of the Holy Ghost" in verse 45, but was not baptized until later in verse 48! On some occasions, the apostles did lay their hands on men to give them the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:18, 19:6), but that was not the only way to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. There is no record of laying on of hands when the Holy Spirit was received in Acts 2:4, 10:44-45, and so on. Nor was laying on of hands ever used in the Bible to confirm church membership. Furthermore, there is not a single verse in the Bible that says the apostles needed the Melchizedek priesthood in order to lay their hands on someone! Thus, when LDS claim this rite is necessary for personal salvation, they have no Biblical example or command.

Church Membership

Joseph Smith claimed that he received revelations from God telling him that the LDS Church is "the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth" (D. & C. 1:30), and that "whosoever belongeth to my church need not fear, for such shall inherit the kingdom of heaven" (D. & C. 10:55). Milton R. Hunter also declared that to enter the celestial (highest) heaven, man "must become a member and live the gospel principles and ordinances of the true church of the Master -which is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, restored to earth through divine revelations to the Prophet Joseph Smith" (G.T.A., p. 166).

If one cannot enter the presence of God (celestial kingdom) without joining the LDS Church, then the Bible is untrue because Paul wrote, "There is one God, and One Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5). If we must have the LDS Church in addition to Christ, then there is not one mediator but two or more! Jesus said, "I am the Way - no man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). He did not say, "No man cometh unto the Father but through My Church."

At the LDS General Conference on April 8, 1973, Apostle Mark E. Peterson said, "Salvation is in the church, and of the church, and is obtained only through the church" (Deseret News, "Church News," April 14, 1973, p. 14). McConkie also declared, "There is no salvation outside The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (M.D., 670). The Bible does not say you must "join the true church" in order to get to heaven. There is no command to "join the church" in the Bible because the Lord Himself adds to His Church those who trust in Him alone (Acts 2:47). The LDS are not alone in claiming to be the only true church. Groups like Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Scientists, and numerous Mormon splinter groups also make that claim! They cannot all be right, so how does one determine who is teaching the truth? For more information on the church, see our chapter entitled, "The Church."

Keep the Commandments

The third Article of Faith says, "We believe that through the atonement of Christ all mankind may be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. Apostle Bruce McConkie said, "Those things which men are directed to do to attain peace in this life and gain eternal life in the world to come are collectively called the commandments. They are laws, ordinances, covenants, contracts, statutes, judgments, decrees, revelations, and requirements which come to man from God" (M.D., p. 149).

Thus, the LDS commandments include everything required for individual salvation. Among the commandments LDS stress most are the Ten Commandments, the Word of Wisdom, tithing, gaining knowledge, being fruitful and multiplying, being virtuous, doing good works, and so on. Let us look briefly at each of these commandments.

1. "The Ten Commandments" were part of the law given to Israel in Ex. 20. Although many LDS say they expect to get to the highest heaven by keeping these and other laws and ordinances, few can even list five out of the ten commandments. How can anyone keep laws they do not even know? Furthermore, Rom. 3:19-20 declares that the law shows that all the world is guilty before God, and "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Paul also wrote in Gal. 2:21, "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." What was the purpose of Christ's death if men could become righteous through keeping the law? "But while we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6, 8). Anyone who says he has kept the ten commandments perfectly is a liar according to Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 3:10-12, 23 and I John 1:8 & 10. Even if we keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, we are guilty of all (James 2:10). Who would be so bold to say that they have kept the spirit of the law as Jesus taught it in Matt. 5:17-48?

2. "The Word of Wisdom" is found in D. & C. 89. Most Mormons think it teaches that they are not to use tea, coffee, tobacco, or alcohol. President Joseph Fielding Smith said of tea and coffee, "Little sins will keep us from salvation" (D. of S., Vol. II, pp. 16-17). Actually, tea and coffee are not even mentioned in D. & C. 89, but v. 9 forbids the use of "hot drinks." Thus, hot milk and hot water should be excluded while iced coffee and iced tea could be used if LDS scripture "clarifies" things like they claim! Smith's Word of Wisdom goes on to teach that "strong drinks are not for the belly but for the washing of your bodies" (v. 7). He further said, "tobacco...is not good for man, but is an herb for bruises and all sick cattle, to be used with judgment and skill" (v. 8). Long before Joseph Smith's Word of Wisdom, Protestant ministers had warned of the dangers of tobacco and alcohol, so the Word of Wisdom could hardly be called new revelation! Most people today realize the harmful effects of tobacco and alcohol and would not argue that they are good for you. But, some would question Smith's statement that strong drinks are for washing of your bodies or that tobacco is an herb for bruises and all sick cattle. Smith then said that all wholesome herbs and fruits are to be used in season by man (vs. 10-11). Does this mean there should be no canned, frozen, or dried fruits or vegetables? Again he said, "flesh" or meat must be "used sparingly and it is pleasing unto me that they should not be used only in times of winter, or cold, or famine" (vs. 12-13). Most of these things are ignored or unknown by LDS, so they aren't really keeping the Word of Wisdom just because they do not smoke or drink!

Jesus declared that it was not what entered the mouth that defiled a man, but that which came out of the heart through the mouth such as evil thoughts, false witness, blasphemies, and so on (Matt. 15:17-20). Thus, for the salvation of the soul (I Peter 1:9), the Word of Wisdom has little value.

3. "Tithing" was an Old Testament principle (Mal. 3:8-10) which has merit in the New Testament dispensation (Matt. 23:23). However, tithing was not instituted as a saving principle as LDS believe. Brigham Young said, "The law of tithing is an eternal law... that God has instituted for the benefit of the human family, or their salvation and exaltation (Deseret News, "Church News," July 20, 1968, p. 14). D. & C. 64:23 also says, "He that is tithed shall not be burned at His coming." Thus the LDS Church is among the churches that the B. of M. warns about when it says, "Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be churches built up that say: Come unto me, and for your money you shall be forgiven of your sins" (Mormon 8:32). Yet, LDS often boast that they serve unpaid while ministers in other churches are "hirelings," who minister just for all the money they get by passing an offering plate. If ministers want to get rich, they are in the wrong profession, because ministry is often one of the lowest paid professions. A lot of ministers also work many more hours each week than those in secular jobs! But, it is not unspiritual for ministers to receive wages as LDS often claim. While the Apostle Paul was a tentmaker (Acts 18:3) and supported

himself that way sometimes, he also said, "I robbed other churches taking wages of them, to do you service" (I Cor. 11:8; 9:6-14).

Even LDS President Joseph F. Smith said of LDS leaders who are paid a salary, "These men, whose whole time is occupied in ministry, are only drawing their necessary support from the church. They must have that - the laborer is worthy of his hire" (G.D., p. 291). The D. & C. teaches the same thing in Sections 70:12, 42:71-73. But, an official LDS promotional book claims, "There is no paid or professional ministry. Thirty-two general officers and the presidents of missions are given living allowances. Add to this a few specialists and a staff of clerks who give their full working time to the church. These constitute all who may be classified as paid personnel" (What of the Mormons, pp. 17-18). An LDS missionary, his family or some Priesthood quorum usually contribute to the LDS church what it costs for him (or her) to serve his mission. Funds were sent directly to the missionary until recently when the IRS would not allow such funds to be counted as "contributions" to a church. So, now the funds are sent through the LDS Church. Missionary support is not counted as "tithes."

Where is the LDS tithe money spent? President Joseph F. Smith said, "Thousands of dollars are being expended to feed and clothe the poor, and to take care of those who are dependent upon the church. They look to their mother for succor and support, and it is right and proper that the church should provide for its own poor and indigent, feeble and helpless, so far as it is possible" (G.D., p. 291). But, if the tithe is spent on the poor, why is a "Fast Tithe" collected the first Sunday of each month to help the poor? In addition, the famous Mormon "Welfare Program" requires a contribution of considerable time and money above the tithe to take care of the needy. The ladies "Relief Society" was also set up for the purpose of helping the poor. With all the LDS collections for the poor and needy, why has Utah, which is around 75% Mormon, consistently had a larger percentage of people on government relief than the national average? Something is wrong! Either Utah has too many poor, needy people, or all the money collected for the poor is not getting to them!

The LDS Church does not publish an annual report of its income and expenses, and it will not open its financial records for examination. While they build some beautiful buildings, the local "wards" or churches are charged by the LDS church headquarters in addition to their tithes for much of that expense. Utah Holiday Magazine reported on March 22, 1976, that the daily income of the LDS Church was \$3,000,000 (p. 4-11). Since then the church has more than doubled its membership, which has also increased its income.

Much of LDS tithe money is invested in land and business. Some of the nation's largest farms, ranches, and orchards are LDS Church-owned. They have large investments in hotels, department stores, insurance companies, newspapers, television and radio stations, canning companies, sugar companies, and so on. The General Authorities of the LDS Church served on the boards of these companies until 1996 and received salaries from them plus their "living allowances" paid directly by the Church. Thus, LDS leaders are all wealthy indirectly from the tithes paid by Church members! (For further information on LDS business involvement, see *The Mormon Corporate Empire* by John Heinerman and Anson Shupe, Beacon Press).

4. "Gaining knowledge" has always been one of man's goals. There is nothing wrong with learning. But, Joseph Smith declared that "The principle of knowledge is the principle of salvation" (T. of P.J.S., p. 297). Thus, "It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance" (D. & C. 131:6). President David O. McKay also said, "The church stands for education... Members of the church are admonished to acquire learning by

study, and also by faith and prayer (Deseret News, April 8, 1968, p. 6A). Why such an emphasis on education and knowledge? It is because D. & C. 93:36 declares, "The glory of God is intelligence." And all good Mormons are striving to become gods themselves (D. & C. 132:19-21). Again, LDS scripture says, "Whatever principle or intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection. And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come" (D. & C. 130:18-19). If this LDS scripture is really true, people from "third world" countries will forever be at a disadvantage because they have not had access to the knowledge available where there are computers, libraries and so on. Furthermore, Joseph Smith and those of his era will also eternally be disadvantaged for the same reason! And the wise gurus of today may someday also be considered deprived if the amount of knowledge continues to spiral upward!

But, the Bible warns that some men are "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (II Tim. 3:7). The "truth" we must know is Jesus Christ (John 14:6). In John 8:32, Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." That truth is Jesus Christ (John 8:36). He sets men free from the bondage of sin (John 8:33-34). And that truth does not leave anyone disadvantaged in any generation or country.

5. "Be fruitful and multiply" was the command given to Adam and Eve in Gen. 1:28. Joseph F. Smith said, "No man who is of marriageable age is living his religion who remains single... No man can be saved and exalted in the kingdom of God without the woman, and no woman can reach the perfection and exaltation in the kingdom of God alone" (G.D., p. 341). And Talmage said, "The Latter-day Saints accept the doctrine that marriage is honorable and apply it as a requirement to all who are not prevented by physical or other disability from assuming the sacred responsibilities of the wedded state (A. of F., p. 443).

Why do LDS place such emphasis on marriage? President Joseph Fielding Smith said, "This earth was created for the very purpose that the spirit children of our Father might have the privilege of the temporal existence, receiving bodies of flesh and bones as tabernacles for the spirits which occupy them" (D. of S., Vol. II, p. 86). Smith went on to say, "Birth Control is wickedness...When a man and woman are married and they agree, or covenant to limit their offspring to two or three, and practice devices to accomplish this purpose, they are guilty of iniquity which eventually must be punished" (Ibid., p. 87). Smith also said, "It is the duty of every righteous man and woman to prepare tabernacles for all the spirits they can.... Moreover, may we not lose our own salvation if we violate this divine law? Birth Control leads to damnation" (Ibid., p. 88). The Bible does not teach that having lots of children helps to save mankind from the penalty of sin.

6. "Being virtuous" or morally clean is a Christian standard. But, President Joseph F. Smith said, "We hold that sexual sin is second only to the shedding of innocent blood in the category of personal crimes; and that an adulterer shall have no part in the exaltation of the blessed" (G.D., p. 388).

Since adultery or sexual sin is second to murder, LDS scripture teaches that the first offense of adultery can be forgiven, but not the second (D. & C. 42:25-26). After LDS take their temple vows (endowments), President Joseph Fielding Smith quotes Joseph Smith, saying, "If a man commit adultery, he cannot receive the celestial kingdom of God. Even if he is saved in any kingdom, it cannot be the celestial kingdom. Of course, a man may, according to the D. & C. 132:26, receive forgiveness, if he is willing to pay the penalty for such a crime; that is he shall be destroyed in the flesh and be delivered unto the buffetings of Satan unto the day of redemption" (D. of S., Vol. II, pp. 93-94).

Brigham Young illustrates this doctrine by saying, "Suppose you found your brother in bed with your wife, and put a javelin through both of them, you would be justified and they would atone for their sins, and be received into the kingdom of God. I would at once do so in such a case; and under such circumstances, I have no wife [Young had at least 53 wives] whom I love so well that I would not put a javelin through her heart, and I would do it with clean hands" (J. of D., Vol. III, p. 247).

No Christian can accept Brigham Young's doctrine of "blood atonement." Killing an adulterer does not make him fit for the kingdom of God! Note how Jesus dealt with the woman caught in the act of adultery in John 8:3-11. He did not condemn her to death.

Divorce is another serious moral issue for LDS. Christians agree that divorce is usually wrong, but when Joseph Fielding Smith said that, "Salvation [is] lost through divorce" (D. of S., Vol. II, p. 81), he is going beyond what the Bible teaches. In John 4:7-42, Jesus dealt with a woman who had five husbands and was then living in adultery with a sixth man. Jesus never told her she had lost her opportunity for salvation. She was the first person that Jesus plainly told that He was the Messiah!

Other moral issues for LDS include such things as dancing, card playing, and gambling. President Joseph Fielding Smith said, "I regret beyond measure the public dance which, in my judgment, in its baneful results - the destruction of good morals and virtue - is second only to the saloon. This evil is growing and taking root in the stakes of Zion, in the communities of Latter-day Saints" (D. of S., Vol. III, p. 301).

Dancing became so well-rooted that it is the most popular LDS entertainment today! Smith went on to say the "church officially condemns card playing" (Ibid., p. 303). But, card playing is also extremely popular with LDS. Then Smith said, "Card playing and all other games of chance should be avoided as the gate of destruction" (Ibid., p. 305). But, many LDS purchase Idaho lottery tickets and bet on the horse races in Wyoming. A popular vacation spot for LDS is Las Vegas, Nevada, where the LDS Church has large investments! LDS who seek such entertainment cannot depend upon their works for exaltation or personal salvation according to the tenth LDS prophet!

7. "Doing good works" is another requirement for LDS "personal salvation." The Bible also teaches that God's people are to be zealous of good works, but it plainly declares that man's works do not save him (Eph. 2:8-10, Titus 3:5-8, Matt. 5:16). But, Mormonism gives works a much more important role in man's salvation. For example, the B. of M. says, "We know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (II Nephi 25:23). Apostle John A. Widtsoe said, "Complete salvation, which is full and eternal life, results from man's full endeavor to conform to the laws of life, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why we often say that men save themselves with the aid of the Lord" (E. & R., p. 190).

The LDS often refer to themselves as Israelites, and they are quite like the Israelites of whom Paul wrote: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayers to God for Israel is that they might be saved... For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:1 & 3).

Mormons are very proud of their good works. President Joseph Fielding Smith said, "We are notwithstanding our weaknesses, the best people in the world" (D. of S., Vol. I, p. 236). LDS talk a lot about their good works. But, when people asked Jesus, "What shall we do that might work the works of God?", He replied, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (John 6:28-29). Paul also said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). But, LDS Apostle LeGrand Richards said, "One common erroneous concept is that belief alone in the Lord Jesus Christ is

the only requirement for salvation... Salvation comes through living the Lord's commandments and doing good works" (Deseret News, "Church News," November 14, 1973, p. 11).

LDS believe that all the foregoing things discussed under "Personal Salvation" are works of righteousness. Therefore they do not like Paul's message which says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior" (Titus 3:5-6). Other Bible passages which deny that works have anything to do with salvation include Rom. 4:5-6, 10:3-4, and Gal. 2:16. Paul even said, "there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Rom. 11:5-6).

Obviously grace and works cannot be mixed together since grace is unearned and undeserved. To work for something that cannot be earned is a contradiction! That is why Paul declared, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). If you can work for a "gift," then it is not a gift! But, Rom. 6:23 says, "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Accept Joseph Smith and His Successors as "God's Mouthpiece"

President Joseph Fielding Smith said, "Mormonism, as it is called, must stand or fall on the story of Joseph Smith. He was either a prophet of God, divinely called, properly appointed and commissioned, or he was one of the biggest frauds this world has ever seen. There is no middle ground" (D. of S., Vol. I, p. 188). Note that it is Joseph Smith, not Jesus Christ, upon which Mormonism stands or falls. Joseph Fielding Smith also said that there is "no salvation without accepting Joseph Smith... No man can reject that testimony without incurring the most dreadful consequences, for he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (Ibid., pp. 189-190). Mormon scripture commands, "Give heed unto all his (Joseph Smith's) words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me. For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith" (D. & C. 21:4-5).

LDS scripture also says, "Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world than any other man that ever lived in it" (D. & C. 135:3). And Brigham Young said, "No man or woman in this dispensation will ever enter the celestial kingdom of God without the consent of Joseph Smith. From the day that the priesthood was taken from the earth to the winding-up scene of all things, every man and woman must have the certificate of Joseph Smith Junior, as a passport to their entrance into the mansion where God and Christ are - I with you and you with me. I cannot go there without his consent. He holds the keys of that kingdom for the last dispensation" (J. of D., Vol. VII, p. 289). Also, the LDS "Church News" declared, "No man or woman in this dispensation will ever enter the celestial kingdom of God without the consent of Joseph Smith" (Deseret News, "Church News," November 2, 1968, p. 14).

Many LDS believe that Joseph Smith will even come again! Brigham Young said, "Joseph Smith, Junior, will again be on this earth dictating plans and calling forth his brethren to be baptized" (J. of D., Vol. VII, p. 289). President Heber C. Kimball also said, "When Joseph comes again, will brother Brigham be removed? No, never. Brother Joseph is ahead; brother Brigham is after him" (J. of D., Vol. V, p. 19).

Thus, Joseph Smith is indispensable to the LDS. But the Bible warns: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm and whose heart departeth from the Lord" (Jer. 17:5). And Paul declared,

"There is one God and One mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5). Was Joseph Smith a man? If Joseph Smith was a man, to trust in him is to be accursed! If Jesus Christ is the only Mediator, Joseph Smith cannot also be a mediator who grants consent or a passport to those entering the celestial glory.

But, D. & C. 43:3-4 declares that Joseph Smith had power to appoint his successors in the prophetic office. D. & C. 68:4 says, "And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation."

General Authority Theodore A. Tuttle said, "Our salvation is contingent upon our belief in a living prophet and adherence to his word. He alone has the right to revelation for the whole church... the greatest of all scripture which we have in the world today is current scripture. What the mouthpiece of God says to His children is scripture" (Deseret News, "Church News," April 7, 1973, p. 11).

President Harold B. Lee quoted LDS Prophet Heber J. Grant, saying, "Brethren, keep your eye on the President of this church. If he tells you to do anything and it is wrong, and you do it, the Lord will bless you for it. But you don't need to worry: the Lord will never let His mouthpiece lead this people astray" (Ensign, October, 1972, p. 7). If that statement is true, then why wasn't it also true of the church Jesus established which LDS claim went into apostasy? LDS claim their church is a "restoration" of the church just like it was in the New Testament. If it is, then the New Testament church could not be led astray either!

Why did the Lord warn about false prophets if the LDS do not need to be concerned about them? A ward teacher's lesson by President J. Ruben Clark said, "When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they propose a plan it is God's plan. When they point the way, there is no other which is safe. When they give direction it should mark the end of controversy" (Improvement Era, June, 1945, p. 354). If the thinking has been done when LDS leaders speak, God should have given them all the brains, since the other LDS do not need to think! (See our comments on "Prophets" and latter-day revelation for more information on this subject.) Jesus warns about "blind leaders of the blind" and says, "if the blind lead the blind both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:14).

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